Kennesaw State University

Center for Statistics and Analytical Services

Every Georgian Counts

2013 Estimates of Homelessness in Georgia (Revised)

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Acknowledgements

This report on the status of the Every Georgian Counts project to better meet the needs of Georgia's homeless, represents the hard work and commitment of many individuals across several organizations. I would like to specifically recognize the work of Jason Rodriguez from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Paul Vaughn, Kelleigh Trapanier and Christy Storey of the A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service at Kennesaw State University, and Daniel Brasuell, graduate student in Applied Statistics at Kennesaw State University.

Executive Summary

Using demographic and econometric data from the 2013 Georgia County Guide, as well as the results of research provided by organizations from across the State, the current study provides an estimate of the number of homeless persons in the State of Georgia for each of the 159 counties. From the *2011 Report on Homelessness*, the previous estimate of unsheltered homeless in the state of Georgia, was 11,366 persons, based on a state population of 9,829,211 (2009 population estimate from the *Georgia County Guide*). The percent of the state population previously estimated to be unsheltered homeless was .1156%. The current estimate of unsheltered homeless is lower at 8,492 persons, based upon the most recent state population estimate of 9,919,945 (2012 population estimate from the *Georgia County Guide*). The percent of the state population currently estimated to be unsheltered homeless is .086%.

The estimated number of individuals precariously housed in Georgia is 4,047, which is .04% of the population.

Together, the number of unsheltered and precariously housed individuals in Georgia is estimated to be 12,538, which is .13% of the population.

Consistent with previous years, the primary demographic and economic variables found to explain homelessness in Georgia included Percent of Population Native Born (negatively related), Property Crime Rate, Arrests, Poverty Rate and Child Abuse Cases (positively related). It should be noted that these factors are "co-present" with homelessness (either negatively or positively) and are not represented as "causing" homelessness.

Introduction

In 2003, the U.S. Congress mandated that every state provide a homeless census every two years to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The State of Georgia, through the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), responded to this mandate by using homeless estimates based on local counts and national studies. Even after the mandate had been in place for three years, Georgia's Balance of State 2007 Continuum of Care Plan continued to rely on very simplistic estimations based upon anecdotal information (Georgia Department of Community Affairs, 2008).

Grappling with the count mandate for the balance of the state was daunting – not only was the sheer size of the state geography an obstacle, but in addition many of the counties covered by the Balance of State Continuum had few homeless service providers. The absence of service providers meant that in many counties there was not a local organizational infrastructure to conduct counts, and a full state count conducted by state employees or contractors looked to be prohibitively expensive. Consequently, counting the homeless population in Georgia seemed an almost Herculean task — a physical census was financially impossible and would have almost assuredly resulted in an undercount. After investigating count approaches used by large locally-based continuums, DCA staff determined that some type of inferential modeling approach would be necessary.

The current report provides the fourth estimate of homelessness in Georgia (previous estimates were developed in 2008, 2009 and 2011) using a combination of point-in-time counts, survey-based data and inferential modeling techniques. The methodology used to develop the current estimates will be explained, followed by the results and a discussion of the limitations and challenges of an inferential approach to homeless enumeration. It should be noted that the current version of the modeling methodology represents a refinement of the previous years' estimates, based upon input from individual county organizers. These refinements will be explained in the Methodology section below.

Methodology

The estimates for counts of unsheltered homeless individuals, and precariously housed individuals by county have been derived from a combination of point-in-time counts as well as survey initiatives across 84 counties. The estimates for the Balance of State, were developed using inferential modeling.

The inferential modeling process utilized data extracted from the 2013 Georgia County Guide. After reviewing the available demographic and economic variables, a total of 26 variables were selected for use in the modeling exercise. All variables included data reflecting 2010 or 2011 information. Variable selections were based upon previous experience with the data, assessment of the variables as potential predictors of unsheltered homelessness, up-to-date information and previous predictive value. The selected predictors came from following areas: economic, courts and crime, education, government, health, housing, labor, public assistance, and vital statistics. Where needed, variables were scaled and/or standardized to facilitate direct comparisons among counties.

An ordinary least squares regression model was developed, using percentage or rate of unsheltered homeless within the single population by county as the dependent variable. The rate of unsheltered homeless, instead of actual counts of unsheltered homeless persons, has always been utilized to remove the effects of population size. In the current methodology, the rate was based upon the single population rather than on the total population. This change was made based upon input from experts from Pathways and from the Dekalb County organization. The rationale being that homeless people come, primarily, from the population of single people – not people living in family units. Once the rates of unsheltered homeless are predicted for each county, the result is then multiplied by the current population to determine the estimated count for counties where counts were not provided.
All analysis was executed using BASE SAS version 9.3.

Results

The final inferential model included six variables found to be significant predictors of unsheltered homelessness. These variables, included the percentage of the gross tax digest coming from mobile homes and agriculture, the percentage of the population identified as having a mental illness, the property crime rate, the rate of child abuse and the percentage of the population which was native born.

The model generated an adjusted R^2 value of about 61%, meaning that 61% of the change or variation in the rate of homelessness by county has been captured using a linear combination of the variables listed above.

The current overall rate of unsheltered homelessness for the State of Georgia is estimated to be .085%. Based on a population of 9,919,945 [1], the current estimated count of unsheltered homelessness in the state of Georgia is 8,492 persons. This estimate represents a substantive decrease from the 2011 estimate of 11,366. Potential reasons for this decrease are provided in the next section.

The 10 counties with the lowest estimated rate of unsheltered homelessness and the highest estimated rate of unsheltered homelessness can be found in Table 1 below.

[1] 2012 population estimate from the 2013 Georgia County Guide.

Table 1: Lowest and Highest Estimated Rate of Unsheltered Homelessness by County

COUNTIES WITH THE LOWEST ESTIMATED RATE OF UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS			
COUNTY	**2012 POPULATION**	**FINAL COUNT**	**EFFECTIVE RATE**
COLUMBIA	131,627	5	0.00380%
EFFINGHAM	53,293	4	0.00751%
HALL	185,416	14	0.00755%
MITCHELL	23,144	2	0.00864%
WORTH	21,741	2	0.00920%
MURRAY	39,392	4	0.01015%
TOOMBS	27,315	3	0.01098%
FORSYTH	187,928	33	0.01756%
DAWSON	22,422	4	0.01784%
FRANKLIN	21,894	4	0.01827%
COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST ESTIMATED RATE OF UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS			
COUNTY	**2012 POPULATION**	**FINAL COUNT**	**EFFECTIVE RATE**
WHITE	27,556	60	0.21774%
HANCOCK	8,996	20	0.22232%
CHATHAM	276,434	615	0.22248%
CLAY	3,116	7	0.22465%
STEPHENS	25,891	60	0.23174%
DODGE	21,329	55	0.25786%
JEFFERSON	16,432	51	0.31037%
ECHOLS	3,988	13	0.32598%
BAKER	3,366	12	0.35651%
TALIAFERRO	1,680	7	0.41667%
GEORGIA	**9,919,945**	**8,492**	**0.08560%**

A full listing of all the rates and counts for all 159 counties can be found in Appendix 1.

Discussion of Results

There are two points with the present study which should be noted.

The first is the estimated decrease in unsheltered homelessness from 11,366 or .1156% of the population to 8,492 or .086% in the current study. The researcher posits two primary factors for this decrease.

The data used to develop the November 2011 estimates came, primarily from 2009 data sources. In 2009, Georgia, like the rest of the country, was experiencing an intense economic downturn.

During this period, Georgia experienced the worst job loss rate of any state in the country[2]. The unemployment rate for Georgia increased from under 5% in 2008 to over 10% in 2009. The current (1Q13) is 8.6%. Of the 500,000+ people who lost private sector jobs in Georgia over this period, many were employed in lower income positions in the construction and manufacturing sectors or the retail sector[3]. These dismal economic indicators would create an expectation, which was manifested, of more Georgians experiencing homelessness. In addition, many of the variables used to develop the estimates, utilize econometric data. As a result, while there may have been a truly "high" number of homeless individuals reported in the 2011 study, the estimate may have also been inflated because of the dependence on the econometric data from 2009.

A second potential reason for the lower estimate for 2013, is related to a few of the larger counties, such as Columbia, Hall, Bibb and Lowndes. Specifically, the reported point-in-time counts for these larger population counties are, statistically unusual. As an example, Columbia County (population 131,627) reported a total of 5 homeless individuals, resulting in an effective rate of homelessness of .0038%. It is worth noting that if the state average rate of .086% is applied to Columbia, the estimate would be about 113. Hall, Lowndes, Bibb counties had similarly unexpectedly low rates of homelessness – .007%, .03% and .04%, respectively.

The second point worth noting is in relation to the precariously housed numbers. Precariously housed individuals are defined as people living a house or apartment but who face the loss of their housing within two weeks or who live in substandard/dilapidated housing, or as people living in a hotel or motel who (a) face the loss of their housing within two weeks and (b) are not having their stay paid for by an agency, church, or other service provider. There were limited 2013 values reported for precariously housed individuals. As a result, the ratios of the precariously housed individuals to unsheltered individuals from the 2011 study were used in the present study. Estimates of precariously housed individuals for each county can be found in Appendix 1.

[2] http://www.gpb.org/news/2010/07/22/georgia-50th-in-job-losses#
[3] http://www.rdhawan.com/booklets/Ga&ATL_Booklet_Feb11_press.pdf

Limitations

As with previous estimates, the present estimates have limitations and should be received in context.

The most important context to consider when reviewing any numbers related to the enumeration of homeless persons is that the true numbers are not only unknown, but arguably unknowable. While econometric and demographic data are generally agreed upon indicators of trends and patterns of homelessness, prediction counts devoid of error is unrealistic.

Because unsheltered homeless and precariously housed individuals are difficult to count, confidence in some of the "actual" numbers may be low. As a result, the accuracy of the predictions from the model becomes somewhat of a moving target. For example, if the "actual" count for a county is 100 but the model predicted 150 for the county, there is a possibility that, given the characteristics of the county, the count is an under representation of the actual homeless population.

While the estimates in the present study should be understood using the lens of the limitations above, the results still have greater than simply directional value – they represent an improvement over previous generalized estimation methods and anecdotal information.

Appendix 1: Unsheltered Homeless and Precariously Housed Counts by County

COUNTY	2012 POPULATION	UNSHELTERED HOMELESS COUNT	PERCENT OF POPULATION	PRECARIOUSLY HOUSED COUNT	PERCENT OF POPULATION	TOTAL	PERCENT OF POPULATION
APPLING	18,368	16	0.08711%	15	0.07992%	31	0.16703%
ATKINSON	8,284	2	0.02414%	1	0.01167%	3	0.03582%
BACON	11,198	14	0.12502%	9	0.07990%	23	0.20493%
BAKER	3,366	12	0.35651%	7	0.21022%	19	0.56673%
BALDWIN	46,367	71	0.15313%	11	0.02411%	82	0.17724%
BANKS	18,316	14	0.07644%	3	0.01426%	17	0.09070%
BARROW	70,169	81	0.11544%	36	0.05082%	117	0.16625%
BARTOW	100,661	35	0.03477%	40	0.03979%	75	0.07456%
BEN HILL	17,538	32	0.18246%	22	0.12275%	54	0.30521%
BERRIEN	19,041	28	0.14705%	14	0.07231%	42	0.21936%
BIBB	156,462	67	0.04282%	29	0.01835%	96	0.06117%
BLECKLEY	12,913	23	0.17812%	11	0.08726%	34	0.26537%
BRANTLEY	18,587	20	0.10760%	9	0.05001%	29	0.15761%
BROOKS	15,403	29	0.18828%	10	0.06462%	39	0.25289%
BRYAN	32,214	35	0.10865%	12	0.03861%	47	0.14725%
BULLOCH	72,694	47	0.06465%	9	0.01303%	56	0.07768%
BURKE	23,125	28	0.12108%	6	0.02807%	34	0.14915%
BUTTS	23,524	33	0.14028%	6	0.02632%	39	0.16660%
CALHOUN	6,504	13	0.19988%	7	0.10402%	20	0.30390%
CAMDEN	51,402	81	0.15758%	7	0.01365%	88	0.17123%
CANDLER	11,117	22	0.19790%	12	0.10657%	34	0.30447%
CARROLL	111,580	59	0.05288%	11	0.00988%	70	0.06276%
CATOOSA	65,046	73	0.11223%	24	0.03741%	97	0.14964%
CHARLTON	13,295	27	0.20308%	17	0.12927%	44	0.33236%
CHATHAM	276,434	615	0.22248%	34	0.01215%	649	0.23463%
CHATTAHO	13,037	16	0.12273%	4	0.03040%	20	0.15312%
CHATTOOG	25,725	41	0.15938%	23	0.08788%	64	0.24726%
CHEROKEE	221,315	160	0.07230%	185	0.08351%	345	0.15580%
CLARKE	120,266	93	0.07733%	28	0.02320%	121	0.10053%
CLAY	3,116	7	0.22465%	3	0.09102%	10	0.31567%
CLAYTON	265,888	130	0.04889%	56	0.02088%	186	0.06977%
CLINCH	6,718	9	0.13397%	6	0.08508%	15	0.21905%
COBB	707,442	146	0.02064%	85	0.01204%	231	0.03268%
COFFEE	43,170	21	0.04864%	3	0.00589%	24	0.05453%
COLQUITT	46,137	9	0.01951%	4	0.00869%	13	0.02820%
COLUMBIA	131,627	5	0.00380%	6	0.00458%	11	0.00838%
COOK	16,923	32	0.18909%	15	0.09112%	47	0.28021%
COWETA	130,929	94	0.07179%	44	0.03333%	138	0.10512%
CRAWFORD	12,600	20	0.15873%	10	0.08289%	30	0.24162%
CRISP	23,606	29	0.12285%	6	0.02531%	35	0.14816%
DADE	16,490	24	0.14554%	12	0.07340%	36	0.21894%
DAWSON	22,422	4	0.01784%	2	0.01045%	6	0.02829%
DECATUR	27,509	17	0.06180%	4	0.01301%	21	0.07481%
DEKALB	707,089	214	0.03026%	543	0.07674%	757	0.10701%
DODGE	21,329	55	0.25786%	19	0.08782%	74	0.34568%
DOOLY	14,318	21	0.14667%	10	0.07069%	31	0.21736%
DOUGHERTY	94,501	106	0.11186%	53	0.05591%	159	0.16777%
DOUGLAS	133,971	120	0.08957%	44	0.03290%	164	0.12247%

COUNTY	2012 POPULATION	UNSHELTERED HOMELESS COUNT	PERCENT OF POPULATION	PRECARIOUSLY HOUSED COUNT	PERCENT OF POPULATION	TOTAL	PERCENT OF POPULATION
EARLY	10,594	17	0.16047%	14	0.13173%	31	0.29220%
ECHOLS	3,988	13	0.32598%	7	0.17496%	20	0.50094%
EFFINGHAM	53,293	4	0.00751%	1	0.00171%	5	0.00921%
ELBERT	19,684	24	0.12193%	11	0.05516%	35	0.17709%
EMANUEL	22,898	18	0.07861%	19	0.08227%	37	0.16088%
EVANS	10,689	15	0.14033%	7	0.06757%	22	0.20790%
FANNIN	23,492	26	0.11068%	12	0.05107%	38	0.16174%
FAYETTE	107,524	68	0.06324%	29	0.02728%	97	0.09053%
FLOYD	96,177	110	0.11437%	26	0.02733%	136	0.14170%
FORSYTH	187,928	33	0.01756%	16	0.00874%	49	0.02630%
FRANKLIN	21,894	4	0.01827%	1	0.00662%	5	0.02489%
FULTON	977,773	1,863	0.19054%	723	0.07390%	2,586	0.26444%
GILMER	28,190	38	0.13480%	12	0.04293%	50	0.17773%
GLASCOCK	3,142	2	0.06365%	1	0.01764%	3	0.08129%
GLYNN	81,022	42	0.05184%	29	0.03603%	71	0.08787%
GORDON	55,766	60	0.10759%	20	0.03542%	80	0.14301%
GRADY	25,440	34	0.13365%	53	0.21012%	87	0.34377%
GREENE	16,092	10	0.06214%	3	0.01968%	13	0.08183%
GWINNETT	842,046	684	0.08123%	256	0.03040%	940	0.11163%
HABERSHAM	43,520	32	0.07353%	10	0.02345%	42	0.09697%
HALL	185,416	14	0.00755%	1	0.00030%	15	0.00785%
HANCOCK	8,996	20	0.22232%	9	0.10476%	29	0.32708%
HARALSON	28,400	24	0.08451%	5	0.01773%	29	0.10224%
HARRIS	32,550	28	0.08602%	9	0.02621%	37	0.11223%
HART	25,518	23	0.09013%	5	0.02132%	28	0.11145%
HEARD	11,633	17	0.14614%	3	0.02889%	20	0.17502%
HENRY	209,053	123	0.05884%	61	0.02901%	184	0.08785%
HOUSTON	146,136	132	0.09033%	16	0.01084%	148	0.10116%
IRWIN	9,600	12	0.12500%	5	0.04885%	17	0.17385%
JACKSON	60,571	48	0.07925%	16	0.02627%	64	0.10552%
JASPER	13,630	13	0.09538%	3	0.01882%	16	0.11420%
JEFF DAVIS	15,156	18	0.11876%	9	0.05884%	27	0.17760%
JEFFERSON	16,432	51	0.31037%	30	0.18348%	81	0.49385%
JENKINS	9,213	10	0.10854%	4	0.04393%	14	0.15247%
JOHNSON	9,897	17	0.17177%	8	0.07745%	25	0.24922%
JONES	28,577	27	0.09448%	5	0.01656%	32	0.11104%
LAMAR	18,057	17	0.09415%	3	0.01895%	20	0.11310%
LANIER	10,400	13	0.12500%	3	0.02407%	16	0.14907%
LAURENS	48,041	28	0.05828%	16	0.03385%	44	0.09213%
LEE	28,746	22	0.07653%	6	0.02001%	28	0.09655%
LIBERTY	65,471	16	0.02444%	6	0.00936%	22	0.03380%
LINCOLN	7,737	4	0.05170%	2	0.02796%	6	0.07966%
LONG	16,048	17	0.10593%	3	0.01722%	20	0.12315%
LOWNDES	114,552	36	0.03143%	14	0.01223%	50	0.04366%
LUMPKIN	30,611	29	0.09474%	4	0.01425%	33	0.10899%
MACON	21,663	31	0.14310%	8	0.03556%	39	0.17866%
MADISON	13,839	22	0.15897%	4	0.02959%	26	0.18856%
MARION	14,263	23	0.16126%	7	0.04805%	30	0.20930%
MCDUFFIE	27,922	16	0.05730%	3	0.01014%	19	0.06744%

COUNTY	2012 POPULATION	UNSHELTERED HOMELESS COUNT	PERCENT OF POPULATION	PRECARIOUSLY HOUSED COUNT	PERCENT OF POPULATION	TOTAL	PERCENT OF POPULATION
MCINTOSH	8,711	13	0.14924%	6	0.07454%	19	0.22378%
MERIWETH	21,273	41	0.19273%	7	0.03479%	48	0.22753%
MILLER	5,969	8	0.13403%	11	0.17952%	19	0.31355%
MITCHELL	23,144	2	0.00864%	1	0.00218%	3	0.01082%
MONROE	26,637	22	0.08259%	6	0.02165%	28	0.10424%
MONTGOME	8,913	16	0.17951%	7	0.07329%	23	0.25280%
MORGAN	17,881	17	0.09507%	5	0.02706%	22	0.12213%
MURRAY	39,392	4	0.01015%	1	0.00208%	5	0.01224%
MUSCOGEE	198,413	110	0.05544%	22	0.01109%	132	0.06653%
NEWTON	101,505	85	0.08374%	11	0.01090%	96	0.09463%
OCONEE	33,619	25	0.07436%	8	0.02409%	33	0.09845%
OGLETHOR	14,618	18	0.12314%	6	0.03906%	24	0.16220%
PAULDING	144,800	84	0.05801%	38	0.02597%	122	0.08398%
PEACH	27,622	17	0.06155%	4	0.01314%	21	0.07468%
PICKENS	29,268	23	0.07858%	5	0.01631%	28	0.09490%
PIERCE	18,844	7	0.03715%	3	0.01849%	10	0.05564%
PIKE	17,810	17	0.09545%	5	0.02669%	22	0.12214%
POLK	41,188	30	0.07284%	7	0.01629%	37	0.08912%
PULASKI	11,720	18	0.15358%	4	0.03296%	22	0.18655%
PUTNAM	21,198	17	0.08020%	3	0.01196%	20	0.09215%
QUITMAN	2,404	3	0.12479%	1	0.05583%	4	0.18062%
RABUN	16,297	9	0.05522%	2	0.01014%	11	0.06536%
RANDOLPH	7,327	11	0.15013%	6	0.07547%	17	0.22559%
RICHMOND	202,587	135	0.06664%	145	0.07146%	280	0.13809%
ROCKDALE	85,820	41	0.04777%	20	0.02375%	61	0.07152%
SCHLEY	4,990	7	0.14028%	3	0.07013%	10	0.21041%
SCREVEN	14,202	18	0.12674%	9	0.06126%	27	0.18800%
SEMINOLE	8,947	12	0.13412%	5	0.05425%	17	0.18837%
SPALDING	63,865	90	0.14092%	18	0.02870%	108	0.16962%
STEPHENS	25,891	60	0.23174%	13	0.05072%	73	0.28247%
STEWART	6,042	12	0.19861%	6	0.10088%	18	0.29949%
SUMTER	31,554	23	0.07289%	13	0.04269%	36	0.11558%
TALBOT	6,517	10	0.15344%	4	0.06745%	14	0.22090%
TALIAFERRO	1,680	7	0.41667%	3	0.19337%	10	0.61003%
TATTNALL	25,384	37	0.14576%	14	0.05706%	51	0.20282%
TAYLOR	8,420	13	0.15439%	5	0.05631%	18	0.21070%
TELFAIR	16,349	19	0.11622%	11	0.06902%	30	0.18523%
TERRELL	9,045	15	0.16584%	24	0.26149%	39	0.42732%
THOMAS	44,724	26	0.05813%	7	0.01590%	33	0.07403%
TIFT	41,064	29	0.07062%	19	0.04601%	48	0.11663%
TOOMBS	27,315	3	0.01098%	6	0.02353%	9	0.03452%
TOWNS	10,495	5	0.04764%	1	0.01059%	6	0.05823%
TREUTLEN	6,769	14	0.20683%	7	0.09935%	21	0.30618%
TROUP	68,468	39	0.05696%	18	0.02619%	57	0.08315%
TURNER	8,410	9	0.10702%	5	0.05439%	14	0.16141%
TWIGGS	8,447	12	0.14206%	6	0.06936%	18	0.21143%
UNION	21,451	17	0.07925%	4	0.01658%	21	0.09583%
UPSON	26,630	24	0.09012%	5	0.01932%	29	0.10944%
WALKER	68,094	63	0.09252%	14	0.01988%	77	0.11240%
WALTON	84,575	92	0.10878%	38	0.04443%	130	0.15321%
WARE	35,821	19	0.05304%	3	0.00843%	22	0.06147%
WARREN	5,578	9	0.16135%	26	0.46612%	35	0.62747%
WASHINGT	20,879	36	0.17242%	18	0.08769%	54	0.26011%
WAYNE	30,305	24	0.07919%	17	0.05496%	41	0.13415%
WEBSTER	2,793	6	0.21482%	3	0.10205%	9	0.31687%
WHEELER	7,888	9	0.11410%	5	0.06566%	14	0.17976%
WHITE	27,556	60	0.21774%	12	0.04330%	72	0.26103%
WHITFIELD	103,359	68	0.06579%	310	0.29983%	378	0.36562%
WILCOX	9,068	11	0.12131%	6	0.06588%	17	0.18719%
WILKES	10,076	10	0.09925%	4	0.04334%	14	0.14258%
WILKINSO	9,577	11	0.11486%	6	0.06385%	17	0.17870%
WORTH	21,741	2	0.00920%	4	0.02007%	6	0.02927%
GEORGIA	9,919,945	8,492	0.08560%	4,047	0.04079%	12,538	0.12640%